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AMUSEMENTS FOR YOUTH.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,
HALIFAX, DECEMBER, 1857,

BY

REV. ROBERT SEDGEWICK.

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AMUSEMENTS FOR YOUTH.

A LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN,—

This is the third time I have come among you ; and what will you, now that I have come, that I say unto you on the confessedly difficult but all important subject which has been assigned to me ? Whatever I may say I claim credit for simplicity of aim and earnestness of purpose in furthering the objects of this Association, and I solicit alike your attention and your candour.

Probably some of you may be expecting that at least odd truths will be presented in a new dress, it may be seemly or it may be grotesque ; or some of you perchance may be imagining that the sour-faced Presbyterian whose features scarce dare clothe themselves with the bland or the cheerful, or glow with the smile of hearty geniality, will assume the air and utter the words of some stern censor of public morals, and prevent with his scowl all approach to the lightsome and the lively. My dear young friends, this be far from me. I had rather by every just means in my power make the human being happier and his means of rational manly pleasures a thousand fold more

abundant and a thousand fold more accessible. There is enough of the hard and the heavy, God wot, in this burdened world; enough of the laborious and exhausting in this toiling state; enough of the sorrowful and heart-wringing in this valley of tears, without attempting to lessen by one rill, the tiniest and remotest, that river of pleasure which still flows through it, and which with its glad waters ministers to the enjoyment of the human heart.

God has made us with a capacity to enjoy. Many proofs of this might be furnished from all the departments of our nature, and from the agreeableness of these to the works of God with which we are surrounded. It is indeed foreign to the design of this Lecture to enter into a discussion of those states of the intellect and those combinations of the affections which have been called pleasureable, and of the adaptations of the external world to those states and combinations; but it is right we should know and rejoice in the truth, that just as there are light and colour to meet and satisfy the eye, and sweet sounds to please the ear and delightful smells to regale the nose, just as there are conjunctures of the beautiful to charm the fancy, and masses of the sublime to elevate the imagination, and freaks of the abnormal to tickle the grotesque, just in a word as the humorous in the man finds its counterpart in the unasserted but obvious resemblances which objects the most diverse nevertheless furnish,—so it is impossible to resist the conclusion that it is the will of God we should be happy, and that this striking correspondence between the constitution of man and the constitution of things is a proof that such is his will.

And, notwithstanding the Fall, this capacity to enjoy remains. Perhaps it is that peculiarity of the human being which has suffered least from the introduction of sin, at all events it is that peculiarity in human nature which, when brought under the power of the grace of God, is most instrumental in raising up man into something of his first estate; so that he becomes the image of the ever blessed God. This capacity moreover is early developed. The infant enjoys. Not only is it the business of the Nurse, but her skill consists in pleasing and amusing the child.

“Behold the child by nature’s kindly law—
Pleased with a rattle tickled with a straw.”

The boy enjoys. What more charming picture than the Prophetic poet paints when forecasting the happiness of the Church in these last times :—"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, there shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem and every man with his staff in his hand for very age ; and the streets of the city shall be full of girls and boys playing in the streets thereof." Indeed boyhood is just another word for amusement. It is the period for fun and frolick ; the period when the capacity to enjoy is most inventive and most powerful. It throws a charm over the most common place objects and invests with a value not easily computed the most indifferent things. What a mysterious worth do buttons possess in their estimation ; and what diligent collectors of the most antique and rarest specimens ! Your modern button, bone or pearl, of the diameter of a seven-pence-half-penny, or the tiny cross thing which glitters in the breast of your would-be dandy, is put down in his estimate at the value of *one*, but your antique specimen which was wont to grace the wristband or the lappells of his grandfather's marriage coat, of the breadth of a dollar with its burnished disc and its mysterious superscription, why that stands for six or it may be a dozen. "I say aunty," said a young rogue whom I have often dandled on my knee, a boy as lovely as he was frolicksome, "I say aunty how many buttons do you think are there?" holding out in his hand some half dozen of the more ancient and rare specimens ; "Six," replied his nurse, "six, John ;" "Six," exclaimed he, in perfect amazement ; "six ! aunty there are thirty six" ! And a jack-knife ; what a treasure ! especially if it has two blades. And does he not hold himself some two or three inches more than straight the first time he discusses its qualities with his favourite schoolmates, who are each most anxious to test the purity and temper of the steel by marking the rate of the dissolving vapour which they had just breathed on it. And how could a boy get on without twine ! It is one of his necessities. It is essential to his plans. He can no more do without it than his mother can do without pins. It is in daily requisition, and sorely, sorely, is that house lacking of one of the first elements of comfort, which has not a regular supply of twine. But then this must never be known. Did he suppose he could get it *ad libitum*, just as much and as often as he thought proper, he would regard it as worthless. It is the scarcity which makes it so valuable in his own eye, and

the possession of it such a privilege in the eyes of his fellows. And what with the buttons, and the knives and the twine, and the marbles, why there are materials of pleasure and amusement within his command which constitute the ultimatum of all his wishes. It is in the game however that the zest of boyhood for amusement is most keen and exciting; especially in those games which require adroitness and skill, and the losing of which incurs a penalty. It is a study to watch a game at marbles, or of hottie, where the knuckles or the palm have to pay the forfeit. Nor did Napoleon or Wellington exult more joyously over vanquished fields than do those boyish conquerors as they make their bowls plunk off the knuckles of the beaten, or the well aimed ball rebound from the swollen palm. It may be worth while to notice that much of the amusement of boyhood consists in mutual effort in furthering some great work. How are their hopes excited and their resources calculated, and what wonderful results do they expect from their labour. On the issue of their undertaking they are as bent as FRANKLIN in attempting to explore the North West passage, or MORSE to encircle the globe with Electric Telegraph. In such expeditions there are the nascent Franklin's and Morse's—the men in embryo or rather in miniature who are in their day to enlarge the capabilities of man for the enjoyment of life, and to increase indefinitely the means of enjoyment.

It has often appeared to me the refinement of cruelty, (and I confess with all ingenuousness that I have been occasionally guilty,) abruptly to terminate such schemes and projects of boyish undertaking and turn all their plans into confusion. Perhaps if the scheme itself be of questionable propriety, or if the carrying of it out may incur consequences of a disagreeable nature to other parties, or hurtful to themselves, prudence may demand that the whole thing be abandoned. But few such schemes are really of this nature when fairly examined; and hence instead of hindering or forbidding, they ought to be encouraged by the countenance and aid of their parents and friends. A Father or Tutor but acts in keeping with his high relationship when he enters into their plans, and stooping from his higher level (if he do stoop) make himself for the time their fellow-labourer and guide. Such countenance intensifies their interest and invests with something like sacredness the entire affair; and the assurance of pa-

rental approbation of their plan and of parental reward on its completion stimulates every step of their progress into greater elasticity; and every hope of success into greater glow. Oh those know little what they do who rudely and rashly interfere with these grave concerns and oblige them to desist at the very time when their hopes were highest and their efforts sturdiest. As was their excitement so is their depression; as was their interest so is their regret. The bitterest grief wrings their heart and blackens their brows, and the catastrophe which has happened is felt to be as great as if a Ministry had fallen, or a Railway Board had been summarily dismissed. The author of their misfortune, no matter who, a heartless Father or an ill-natured old Aunt, is set down as their enemy, and it is long ere they regain their old place in their hearts. And what is worse than all, such rude interference sours their temper and engenders a feeling of chagrin and bitterness which tinges their deportment all the way through life.

It is of equal importance to notice that in Boyhood the versatility of the powers of the mind is signally manifested. The playground is a fit appendage to the school. The exciting game prepares the mind all the more readily for grappling with the intricacies of Arithmetic and the abstractions of Mathematics. The romping boy is the reasoning pupil; and he whose laugh was loudest and whose foot was swiftest and whose stroke was hardest and whose raillery was keenest when mingling in the sports of the field or the parlour is the same who, as if by some divine intuition, can resolve almost at a glance the problems of Euclid or the hidden mysteries of a Bonnycastle or a Thomson.

When I think on Boyhood in its cares and its carelessness; on its wild glee and its musing melancholy; on its fervid hopes and resolute exertions; on its ambitious plans, skill and scheming; when I think on its hearty friendship and simple love; on its generous impulses and noble deeds; on its unselfish spirit and magnanimous superiority to all that is spiteful and all that is mean; when I think me of its oblivion of the past and its hopes for the future none the less pleasing that they end so often in airy nothings and a name; and of the jocund mirthfulness and persuasive zest which it contrives to infuse into all that is present; I am constrained oftentimes to exclaim with poor

Byron when musing on the follies and the crimes of his youth and manhood,

"Who would not be a boy again!"

The youth enjoys, and it is to this particular period of human life with its exquisite susceptibilities to all that is sensuous (not sensual) whether material or spiritual that the remaining portion of this Lecture shall be devoted.

It behoves to be asserted here at the very beginning that now the period of boyhood having terminated with all its earnest preparatory labors and all its multifarious pleasures and joys, the period of sober, active service in the great business of life has begun; the term of responsible exertion has commenced; the time has arrived when the claims which society has on us must begin to be answered. It is true indeed that there is a wide difference between youth and manhood so far as these claims go, and so far as the responsibilities connected with the working and maintenance of society are concerned; still the difference is not one in kind, so much as one in degree and position. The Lawyer's clerk is the future Advocate; the article apprentice is the future journeyman, or the future employer; the tyro on the tripod, behind the desk in the dingy counting-room, is the Merchant in prospect whose fiat may yet rule the emporium of trade and commerce, and whose generous enterprises may spread wealth and happiness all over the world.

Think not my young Friends that this is an unwise or a hard arrangement. Think not that there is any thing wrong in the economy of labor, because that economy makes demands on you. It is a wise arrangement and as good as wise; and the economy of industry would be altogether defective did it fail to put in requisition your powers and capabilities. It is an honor to work. Probably *drones* are of some use in a Bee-hive; I confess I am not Naturalist enough at present to determine, but one thing I know, drones are of no use in a human hive. They are a positive drawback. Not only are they not useful, they are hurtful. Your lazy fellow, having no place of his own which he cares to keep, is continually in other people's way, and positively hindering the progress and marring the harmony of the movements of Society. It is an honor to work. A working man myself, at labour by night and day continually at the exhausting toil of the

Presbyterian Ministry, if by any means I may quicken the energies of my fellow men to labor in that which is convenient, that they may provide for their own wants and have to give to them that need, and that they may give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, I but magnify my office when I proclaim in the name of my MASTER that it is an honor to work ! Laziness is an abnormal state. It is contrary to law. It is in opposition to the constitution of things. It is in defiant antagonism to the course of nature. Inanimate but organised creation condemns it, for,

The unwearied sun from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

The rills and the rivers run into the sea ; and the sea itself, though sometimes it lies placid and splendid as a molten looking-glass, is, nevertheless, ceaselessly at work—its mysterious tidal waves ever on the move and its gentle murmuring, or its tempestuous raging ever echoed, by its far resounding shores.

Animate creation condemns it. The Bee and the Beaver scowl it out of countenance. "Go to the Ant thou sluggard ; consider her ways and be wise ; which having no guide, overseer or ruler, provides her meat in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard, when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep ? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep : so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth and thy want as an armed man." Angelic creation condemns it. I know little of the Angelic nature, but aught that I do tells me that laziness is abhorrent to them, and that their joyousness consists in their activity. I know that excelling in strength they do God's commandments, ever hearkening to the voice of his word ; that they are his ministers and do his pleasure ; and that far-reaching as may be the ken of their understanding and purely blazing as may be the affections of their hearts, and awfully overwhelming as may be the hidings of their power, and swift as the lightning's flash may be the speed of their movements, and lofty as may be their station amid the principalities and powers of the universe, and brilliant and grand beyond our conception as may be the greatness and the

goodness of their character, Oh they deem it an honor to work in the service of their Lord and never, never do they more resemble and glorify HIM than when as ministering spirits they minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. What shall I say more? Christ after whose name your Association is named, and no more honorable title could you assume, Christ Himself condemns laziness. He wrought, aye and He wrought till He had finished His work. He wrought the works of Him that sent Him. From the period when His youth began down till the grandest moment in this world's age when having exclaimed in so triumphant a spirit "It is finished" He bowed His head and gave up the ghost, He was never idle. And I know not a fairer example of hearty industry nor a sterner reproof of sluggishness and sloth than the reply which he gave to his mother to soothe her anxieties and mollify her motherly disapprobation, "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business." Every rightly constituted creature in its right place and fulfilling its allotted destiny condemns laziness; and no more fitting emblem can there be of its pestiferous effects than yonder stagnant pond which however it may ingulf the limpid rill or the turgid torrent, sends forth no glad streams from its barren bosom, and from whose monotonous surface on which there floats the lazy slimy worthless flags, there ascends the foul and pestilential vapour.

Labor then is the condition of this period of your life, and as it would seem it is an honorable condition. But there are alternations to labor, indeed labor supposes rest and recreation, and it is just as natural and as necessary now as when you were boys though not certainly to the same degree that there be intervals of labor and that some of these intervals be filled up with appropriate amusements.

And here beginneth the difficulty and the delicacy of the task which I have proposed to myself.

If I could regard the human being as he once was and as he ought to be, if I could regard that wonderful combination of mechanism and of mind, that mysterious congeries of thought and passion, of energy and action, of power and will which we call a young man, as in a morally and spiritually healthy state, and as having no inherent tendency to run wild amid the profusion of the sensuous, of the beautiful and the true and the good

with which he is surrounded, I would find no difficulty in bidding him revel at will as if amid the bowers and the bliss of paradise. But I dare not ignore the fact (and you would despise me if I did) that the human being is not what he once was. The present is not his first estate "He fell from the estate in which he was created by sinning against God," and one of the effects of this fall lies in the fact that in regard to the thing we call pleasure his judgment is perverted, I had almost said absolutely perverted, so turned aside at any rate that no matter what authority and experience say to the contrary he will call good evil and evil good; he will put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; he will insist on it that darkness is light and light is darkness.

Now with a being so perverted it is most difficult to deal on the question of amusement, not so much as to its amount, as to its influence on the depraved and perverted creature who nevertheless needs it and must have it if its present condition is to be at all desirable.

There is one obvious remark which at this point must be introduced if the subject in hand is to be impartially treated. At all events the obvious nature of the remark ought to appear as soon as it is made. Amusement must be subordinate and subservient to labor. Labor is the business, Amusement is the relaxation; Labor is the principal, Amusement is the subsidiary. Labor engrosses and tasks. It involves the exercise of the skill and power of the whole man. Amusement is the unharnessing of the toiler for the time and the setting him at liberty so that as the unharnessed horse he may bound at will over the sweeping lawn amid the gladsome sheen of the summer sun.

Now this obvious and most important distinction serves as a stand point whence to apprehend the province and the limits of amusements. The province and the limits, for with regard to the nature of amusement in general or of any specific amusement as right or wrong in itself, he will be a wise man who can settle the question, and he will be a bold one who shall attempt to settle it. I make no pretensions to such wisdom and I would shrink from passing a judgment on a subject which with general consent has been left open, and lest I should come under the charge of an Apostle when he saith "Blessed is he who condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth."

Now the province and the limits of amusement seem to be inclosed within these boundaries, Time, Obligation, Money, Morals, Health, Religion; and a short but an impartial view of the bearing of amusement on these several topics will serve to place it in its proper position and assign to it its due influence.

Amusement as well as labor requires *time*; but on the principle already stated nothing can be clearer than that the amount of time to be spent in amusement behoves to bear but a small proportion to the amount dedicated to labor. No part of the time which belongs to your employers or masters ought to be spent in amusement at all. It is not yours, and the spending of this time in this manner is neither more or less than a species of theft. We in the country, where after all there is plenty of amusement, although your city folks affect to pity us, we are so destitute of pleasure,—we in the country are sometimes vexed at the *non-chalance* with which our rural mechanics regale themselves with a spring on the flute when their fingers ought to be plying the implements of their craft, the thrifty housewife meanwhile smothering her wrath and grumbling out murmurs not loud but deep that such a thoughtless loon is sadly in her way. And it is no uncommon thing for a large portion of the best part of a summer's day to be spent lolling over the fence talking badinage or scandal to some equally faithful neighbor, the teams of the two standing side by side. Even in town, and indeed more extensively, the same thing prevails. The absence of the master or employer is the signal for the reading of some favorite novel, or the sly luxury of a game of draughts,—while his unexpected return covers the culprits with surprise and confusion and often leads to the most ludicrous and grotesque results.

Where there is time at command which is not properly another's and which may be disposed of as it suits the inclination, the relative importance of amusement and employment should regulate the amount which is given to the former. The evenings of our young men who are employed the whole day afford the most favorable opportunity for such recreation. But it would certainly be wrong were every evening so employed even if all other things were favourable, they would in this case enervate themselves and unfit themselves for their daily duties. But what is worse, such frequent amusement would dissipate the mind as well as the body, it would beget disinclination to regular labor, would

so far as all the higher efforts of man are concerned soon reduce the mind to a mere blank, perhaps it would be better to say a blotted blank and the body to an ill working machine.

There is a class of our young men who belong to the upper ranks in society of whom it may in truth be said they do not know what to do with themselves. Raised above the necessity of labor, and furnished with an abundant supply of pocket money, or if stinted somewhat in this most necessary article drawing somewhat liberally on the credit of their father; why from morn till night and from night till dewy morn, their life is just one round of amusement. Lolling abed till my dinner hour and dreaming of the last night's revel or planning for the next day's drive they get up and sipping a cup of your most *recherche* Mocha, and eating a slice of your thinnest toast, they amuse themselves with whiffing their favorite Havannah and carelessly glancing over the newest of the Novels. But they must dress, and what an important matter is this! It is a great part of the business of their lives. At it however they go, and throwing aside their elegant morning gown in which they have lounged, they fit themselves up according to the most approved style, and having finished their toilet down to the most precise angle of their hat and the exact amount of cambric which peers from their breast pocket hole, they sally forth to amuse themselves with a saunter along Barrington Street, or a game at Billiards at the Waverly,* or a drive to the north end to see and be seen of all observers. But the dinner hour arrives, after my supper hour is past, and they must dress for dinner—after all the care in dressing before dinner—yes, dress for dinner. It was no wonder that old gruff Dr. Johnston exclaimed on encountering one of those fastidious gents who had just dressed for at least the third time that day, and on learning that he had changed his linen every time: "What a dirty fellow you must be: I only need to change mine once a

* The author deems it but just to explain, and he is glad of this opportunity of doing so, that he had no direct reference to the Waverly Hotel in Halifax distinct from other and similar first class Hotels. He only presumed that Billiards might be played there as he is well aware that they form a department of fashionable amusements in such Hotels both on this Continent and all over Great Britain.

He has learned with satisfaction that there are no Billiards at the Halifax Waverly.

week !" But the dressing and the dining over, why they repair to the drawing room to amuse themselves again in small talk to the ladies or it may be luxuriating amid the fascinations of music and song. But night comes inviting me and my fellow labourers to rest, and promising to invigorate my exhausted powers by

"Nature's sweet restorer balmy sleep,"—

and just about the hour when we are surrounding the throne of the Heavenly Grace and committing ourselves to the protection and the care of the ever watchful God, they repair to the Ball-room or the Theatre, or the supper-party, as the case may be, and amuse themselves still again with the representations of the stage, or the whirl and excitement of the dance and the feast, till grey morning shame them into cessation. And thus pass day by day and night by night, of the men who, perchance, in virtue of their position, or their wealth, are yet to give its tone to society and mould the manners of the age. Surely this is a waste of time, surely this is excess if anything is excess. Surely here is amusement run wild, and the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, lording it over the poor slave with imperious and tyrannical sway.

Amusement must be limited by *obligation* as well as by time ; it must never be allowed to interfere with solemn and honorable engagement. The sum of what might have been advanced under this division has already been stated ; but in consequence of the place which engagements hold in our social economy and the numerous and strong temptations which amusements furnish in large cities to break them it would be wrong to omit specific reference to them.

In the case of young men coming in from the country and who are presumed to be all but ignorant of city life, the temptations to tamper, in the first place, with the arrangements they have formed and then to break them, through means of amusement, are very strong and not easily resisted. Accustomed to entire freedom at home, or all but entire freedom, as to the management of their time, the restraints sit heavily upon them. They have for a while little idea of being punctual to an hour much less to a minute, and as to the notion of being obliged to solicit an after-

noon now and again in order that they may enjoy themselves—why that is a humiliation to which they cannot stoop and an amount of self denial they are not prepared to endure. The effect of all this soon appears. When the opportunity offers of some rare pleasure as they fondly imagine, when their judgment is blinded and their heart perverted, the enticement urgent, and reason, and conscience, and home, are all driven into a corner,—the ties of obligation are too feeble to hold them, and master, and employments and character and prospects, and the hopes of parents and the happiness of home are forgotten or despised, and not till the amusement has ceased—leaving a heavy and crushing sense of unfairness and unmanliness behind, and reflection has returned with its saddening remembrance—does the poor soul feel that for a few hours or a day's enjoyment he has paid a price alas too dear.

Now it is not that there was much wrong in the amusement; it may have been such as to comport with good morals and piety. It is not that the time spent was in itself great, or might not have been spared without loss to the employer or inconvenience to the establishment. It is not in a word, that there was essential damage done to any party, master or man. But there was the relative damage; there was the breaking of the engagement, the violent injustice done to the mutual pact; the over-riding those rules without rigid attention to which the business world would run into confusion in a month and our Counting-houses and Banks, and Stores, and Wharves, would present a mass of inextricable disorder.

Amusement must be limited and guarded by a due regard to MONEY. And here comes the pith and the heart of this solemn theme, and where it begins to touch most powerfully on all the higher interests of our social state. It seems to be a condition of our civilization that amusement and money are connected. Whether it is a necessary condition is a question. At all events whether the amusements of a people should necessarily depend on the private resources of a people, is a grave and most important question, but one which cannot be grappled with now. As it is there is little amusement for the young, and especially for young men, as amusement is generally understood without being purchased. Amusement is a marketable commodity. It is sold

and bought. Indeed there is no other way of getting it. And there is this peculiarity about this traffic that in the strict sense of the terms I do not get a *quid pro quo*. At all events the *quid* is a remarkably airy reality, an "airy nothing" if even a "name." It has little substantiality about it. It is not very palpable. At the best if not at the most it is an assemblage of agreeable colouring associated with a combination of sweet sounds and of fleet and agile movements. Now even though in every other respect amusements were what they ought to be, they are generally too dear. It is true there is a graduated rate of prices to suit the contents of the different kinds of purses and the different classes of persons, just as there is corresponding accommodation at the place of sale; and so there are the front seats for the honorable, and the back seats for the *canaille* and the reserved seats (would you believe it) for the very refined and exclusive. But the lowest figure in the scale is by far too high considering the multiplicity of such amusements and the pertinacity with which they are palmed on the public. An apprentice lad could easily spend his weekly wages on amusements alone. A shopman or a clerk would swamp his small salary, long before the year had expired, leaving his Landlady or his Mother to look for the price of his Board and Lodging all the way onward to the Greek Calends, while the sums so sunk by the upper ranks of life are absolutely appalling even to the political economist because of its unwise and impolitic diversion from its appropriate channels. Now the fact is the amusement will be had no matter what its cost, and no matter how the money is to be obtained. It were easy, however painful, (and the attempt will not be made,) to tell how in multitudes of cases the money is obtained, but while prudence cautions against unnecessary exposure and harrowing details, faithfulness and love urge the assertion in the strongest possible terms, that the price of amusement and the race to obtain it, embody one of the most mighty temptations with which the young man has to contend in our large cities.

Now here again it is not the amusement itself that is the subject of regret and reprobation. It is not that there is anything wrong in itself in hearing Jenny Lind sing, or Signor Paganini play; it is not that there may not be much to please and instruct really in some at least of the masters of music and of song; but it is the expense. It is the extravagance and waste

of the money which cannot be afforded at all or that might be laid out to greater advantage. This is the evil, and the amount of the evil it is not easy to compute.

Leaving this thought it requires to be stated further that amusement must be limited and guarded by a due regard to MORALS.

Amusement to answer its end must be moral. It could be demonstrated that as soon as amusement degenerates into the immoral it ceases to be amusement. It ceases to be a recreation. Immorality cannot recreate. It weakens, it wastes, it destroys, but it is not in immorality to recreate. There is nothing of the renovating, nothing of the recuperative, in any of its degrees; nor does it militate against this statement which may startle some of you, (would that it convinced all!) that the Scriptures speak of the pleasure of sin. It does; but bating the distinction which may fairly be drawn between pleasure and amusement (taking the strictly literal view of the question) the statement may be regarded as the popular and common sense view of the perverted tendencies of our nature to which I have already adverted.

And that such a guard as this seems to be necessary is manifest from the common language "innocent amusements," implying, if it imply anything, that amusement otherwise designated is a delusion and a lie. It may seem to partake of its nature and to accomplish its ends but in reality it neither partakes of the one nor answers the other, and at best is but a false friend with a fair face.

If anything then puts in a claim as an amusement or is paraded as an amusement by the interested and the mercenary, if anything is recommended strictly as such or regarded as such by common consent, which infringes on the principles or trenches on the province of good morals, it ought to be viewed with suspicion and shunned with aversion as alike an enemy to virtue and happiness. And no matter whether such amusements be confined to the home circle or dwell in the haunts of fashion and gaiety, it is to be "cut" by every young man who would maintain his self-respect and avoid being entangled with its meshes and its wiles.

And here seems the appropriate place to advert to those

amusements which the Theatre furnishes and which have of late been occasioning very much anxiety among yourselves; especially as they affect the welfare of the young. It is right that on a question of this sort "days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom." It is right too that on a question of this sort days should be heard and the young should learn wisdom at their lips. I am now growing an old man, and God has given me a numerous family, but I declare in the presence of the God of the families of Israel, and in the midst of this assembly, comprising a large proportion of the intelligence and moral influence of this city, that I would sooner lay the head of my boys one after another in the grave till the whole six were stretched side by side with each other, than that I should witness them forming a taste and manifesting a preference for Theatrical amusements! And my Father felt for his sons as I feel for mine. He was no minister as I am, and only moved for a pretty long life amid the better class of working men. He was no Presbyterian though I hope a christian; or if he was, he was likely one of your *moderates*, as he belonged to the abbey parish and sat under the ministry of the well knowu Doctor Bogue; he was an Englishman every inch, and Yorkshire to the back-bone, and I do but justice to his memory when I say though I only knew it from the older members of the family and my mother, as well as from common report among his contemporaries, that he was an example of that integrity, and honour, and independence, and industry, for which Englishmen of his class are so highly distinguished. The second and the last flogging I ever got from him was for being at the playhouse. How I got there I have no remembrance, but I must have been enticed, for I could not have been more than seven or eight years old. How he knew I was there I cannot tell, but at a distance of more than forty years I feel the misery I endured when with nervous clutch he caught me by the neck and dragged me all trembling and quaking home, and when with his broad and leather hand (for he was a tanner) he laid on in a style worthy the occasion. Am I alone the subject of this anxiety?—or was *my* Father a solitary example of unnecessary concern? Am I not reading in all this a chapter in almost every family history; and am I not entitled to conclude that there must be something essentially bad about a place, and in the dangers of an amusement, which

fills my Father's heart with such bitter sorrow and agonizes it with such fearful forebodings.

I might rest the whole subject of Theatrical amusements here and dispose of it as a wrong and an evil because of its antagonism to the holy and happy working of the Family economy. It may be as well, however that something more be advanced to show that in their very nature, they trench on morality. I do not imagine there is anything wrong in confessing to some slight acquaintance in Dramatic Literature; not indeed with the literature of the stage during the last twenty years, except as it has been learned from our Magazines and reviews. But what after all is the character of this literature within this period? Why so degenerate has the theatrical taste become that driven to their wit's end the most unnatural and grotesque of the Arabian Nights Entertainments have been dramatized, and the foul and fascinating creations of Bulwer's blackguardism have been dramatized, and the wild senseless licentiousness of Byron's Don Juan has been dramatised, by the caterers of the stage, and when these palled the diseased appetite by their very grossness and were consigned to oblivion, why they have dared, as was never done before, even when sanctioned and encouraged by the authority of the Roman Catholic Church; (for she among her other abominations is a patroness of the Theatre, nay, what is her Mass but a mumbled show! Her Altar a stage! Her priests—priests—they are no priests! Her priests actors some of them very clumsy, triggred out in gaudy trumpery, and her Mass but a scenic burlesque of the sufferings and death of the DIVINE SAVIOUR;) yes they have dared as was never done before since the dark ages to invade the domain of the Bible and as at this moment in Paris and probably in London, to dramatize the scenes of Paradise and the awful mysteries of Gethsemane and the Cross.

But say the Philosophic patrons of the Theatre the legitimate Drama is all right, and such representations are but a prostitution of the stage. The legitimate drama is all right! And no harm can come of the Theatre when it contents itself with the legitimate drama! The legitimate drama!—that is the theme, and it is the favourite phrase, so favourite that I can scarce get rid of it. Well I deny that the "legitimate drama"

is all right. I take Shakespeare as the father, or probably as the exponent of the legitimate drama of modern times and I affirm that on the principles of morality as these are now admitted and acknowledged by every Ethical School of any authority the tendency of Shakspeare's plays even in private reading is immoral, and a thousand fold more so when acted on the stage. There are passages even in the finest of his plays that should not be read at the parlour table, and which would make a virgin in her purity blush all over even though she read them in the privacy of her own room. He himself indeed took a very different view of his art when he makes Hamlet say in his celebrated speech to the players that "The end of acting, both at the first and now, was and is, to "hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time her form and pressure." This is a mere fallacy founded on the assumption that as to virtue and vice man is *in equilibrio* and that nothing more is necessary in order to make man virtuous than exhibiting to him in living form the advantages of the one and the detriment of the other. He is not *in equilibrio*. There is a fatal bias on the side of vice, and no matter how the play may develop the pangs of despised love, the gnawings of green-eyed jealousy, the whinings of cunning artful hypocrisy as these are seen in the wondrous impersonations of the Shakspearian characters, and though it comply with the dramatic canon of awarding their appropriate fate to each, the playgoer does not learn to be the less lawless in his loves, nor to be less the victim of this same jealousy and hypocrisy than he was before. By its fruits let the tree be tested. Show me your faith in the power of the legitimate drama to make men wiser and better, by example. Where are your converts from the grovellings of covetousness, from the soarings of ambition, from the gloatings of revenge, from the gripings of despair, which your Falstaffs, and your Macbeths, and your Shylocks, and your Lears have ever made. Can any venture to say of the play-goer, what Paul said of the church-goer, "Such were some of you, but",—I fear me I am going too far and instituting comparisons which are bordering on the unlawful.

And from the Stage turn to the accessories of the Stage. Everything connected with the Theatre exhibits the baser pas-

sions of the soul. The voluptuous swell of the music, the scanty dimensions of the female costume in the dress boxes, the gesticulations of the actors, worse than are practised in the lascivious dances of the obscene Indian tribes, and of which your own MicMacs would not be guilty even in their wildest and most frantic mood, the leering of the gents in the pit, the uproarious foulness of the gods in the gallery, the glare of the gas, and the fumes of the rum, together with a sense of heat and pressure and the utter absence of any thing that is serious save it may be at the crisis of the play and when the plot is in the act of evolving, constitute a combination of means and appliances to set the soul on fire without a parallel on the face of the earth. Is it any wonder that Bacchus rears his temple in juxtaposition to Thespis and that Venus has her shrines in significant contiguity. Is it any wonder that the Epilogue of the play is the deep debauch and the degrading pollution, and that it is the very mother of the vice which with her hypocritical cant she professes to uproot. My father was right when he flogged me for going to the play; and you will spare your father many an anxious hour, and many a worrying fear and will fill him with confidence and hope as to your future career, if with manly resolution you shut your ears to the voice of this charmer, charm she never so wisely.

Amusement must be limited by a due regard to health. Indeed one of the ends of amusement is to restore health, or, if likely to give way, to establish and invigorate it. It is with this view that invalids are so often recommended to a residence on the seaside or to spend some time at some congenial watering place. Not that after all there is much of the medicinal either in the sea air, or in the mineral water but that contiguity and connection with the sublime and beautiful by which such localities are distinguished and that the minor facilities of enjoyment with which they are furnished, have a wonderfully restoring power on our animal constitution.

Such however is the perversity of our nature that what is for health is often turned into an occasion if not a cause of disease. I believe that dancing as an exercise is conducive to health. As a part of the gymnasia and of the training of our higher schools no exercise is better fitted to develop our frame and expand it in all its divine beauty and proportion than dar-

cing. But I believe as well that as an amusement it is destructive to health. The Ball room may be a gay scene and sometimes a gorgeous one ; and there may be found concentrated in such a place the very quintessence of the refined and the elegant. Art is made to out-vie nature, and nature herself is rifled of its choicest and rarest riches to impart zest and brilliancy and splendour to the fete ; but the ball room is often the pathway to the sick room ; and the bounding waltz, and the romping reel but hasten the oncoming of that fell disease which wastes our beauty like a moth and dries up our strength like a potsherd. It requires no profound research to account for this fact, and it might be profitable to expatiate on the connection which ties dancing as an amusement, and disease together ; but perhaps it is sufficient that the fact be indicated to direct the attention of the youth before me, for sure I am that could the histories of our balls be written simply with respect to their bearing on health they would resemble Ezekiel's roll which was written within and on the backside and whose contents were mourning, lamentation and woe.

There is one other source of pleasure, (I cannot call it amusement) which I feel constrained to specify mainly for its bearing on the subject of health. I refer to impurity—to the common breach of the seventh Commandment. If it be the tendency of immorality generally to weaken and waste and destroy, verily such is the tendency of this pleasure. Now you must bear with me when I proclaim fornication as the youngman's sin. It is the *young man's crowning sin*. It is the sin which finishes the portrait of the rake, it is the climax and the concentration of all that constitutes a fast liver, a man about town, a *roue*—as the French have it, and which brands such a man as a moral pestilence. Ambition may be the crime of unsanctified manhood, and gripping avarice the sin of old age, and to gratify the ambition and nurse the avarice may be the business and the delight of the poor fools together ; but the sin of impurity cleaves to the young as really and as lamentably as ambition and avarice to manhood and age. Now I waive all reference to the effects of this sin whether on the intellectual or the emotional parts of our nature, or how it converts the understanding into a receptacle of vile thoughts and the heart into a receptacle of vile affections. I waive the fact that it defiles the eye

and pollutes the tongue. I waive the fact though I am sorry to do so that it depraves and brutalizes the ideas and sentiments of young men regarding the place and the functions of women in society and unfits them and disinclines them for the duties, restraints, obligations and holy delights of the married state. Oh, lust is not love, as your vile sensualist would teach us, and it would be a moral miracle indeed to find your systematic seducer or your weekly frequenter of the brothel and the stew, the companion of the bawd and the slave of the whore, a devoted husband, a wise and kind father, content and satisfied with the pleasures of home. But I press you to look at this picture on the score of health, on the authority of your most skilful physiologists, I assert, even though it were accompanied with no positive and organic disease, it undermines the constitution. Associated as the practice is with deep drinking and irregular repose, untimeous meals and hours; connected as the practice is with everything which has the effect of exciting unduly our animal propensities; the well-springs of life itself are dried up and vitality reduced and weakened; the functions of the several organs of the body refuse to work, and disorder and inability necessarily ensue. Hence the crow toes round about the eyes now sunken in their socket. These same "crow toes" are an infallible sign of fast living in a young man, and the blanched cheek, and the palsied arm, and the tottering unsteady gait, and in a word, the indescribable air of broken-down-ism which many of your young men carry about with them, and which, in defiance of all that fashion and frippery can suggest and apply, it is impossible to hide.

I dare not enter farther on this topic lest I might be accused of violating the rules of good taste, but I will venture to specify and condemn what I regard as one of the chief incentives to licentious indulgence. Quackery in anything is most abhorrent. It is revolting as it is ridiculous, and it is ruinous as it is revolting; but quackery in crime is the most ruinous and revolting of all quackery. The quack however must have a medium through which to proclaim the virtues of his catholicon and thereby fatten on the popular gullibility. Quackery would be a poor business after all if it were not for the newspaper; and Radway and Holloway, and this and that, would find their occupation gone, were it not that this is the age of cheap adver-

tisements. Are not the quack advertisements on the secret infirmities of youth a most gentle description? You see it would never do for the quack to call ugly things by their right names. Are not these advertisements a black foul blot on our newspaper press? And are not the newspaper proprietors guilty of a wrong in inserting or allowing the insertion of such vile trash in their pages? Advantage is taken and I know it, I know it even as respects my own comparatively secluded part of the country, from these advertisements, of yielding to sensuality in the hope of escaping the consequences with impunity or of an easy and speedy deliverance from them; and thus is the evil perpetuated through the very means which are, shall I say it?—falsely and hypocritically alledged to remove it. I confess I have often trembled when on the newspaper being laid on the parlour table and the flaring half column, with all its vile and specious blarney, flashing in the face of my little fellows, lest their curiosity should prompt questions which I dared not answer. I know not why the privacy of my fireside should be invaded and endangered by such insidious poison. I have a right to something better for my two or three dollars; and as the guides of public opinion, and to so great an extent the guardians of public morality, I call on the proprietors and conductors of the newspaper press to cease hereafter from this most questionable means of making their concerns pay. You are assuredly, as the fact now stands, partakers of other men's sins, and whether you acknowledge it or not, you afford encouragement to and pander to one of the giant evils of the day, and lessen to an immeasurable extent your good influence in society. The leading journals in the old country, be it spoken to their praise, refuse insertion to all such communications; let us hope that the leading journals in this country will imitate the example.

Amusements should be limited and guarded by RELIGION. This is so obviously true that to some it may seem a truism; but it is so vastly important that I have reserved it till now. I have ventured the remark already that as soon as amusement degenerates into immorality it ceases to be amusement. But if so, much more is it true that so soon as amusement degenerates into irreligion it ceases to be amusement. The spirit of religion should limit and guard it, and so should its forms and institutions. Now if this be admitted, and surely no man, at

any rate no protestant man, will question or deny it at this time of day, then it disposes of all Sabbath day recreation and amusement. And it does so, not only to the christian but to the mere moralist who acknowledges the being of a God and of course the obligations of natural religion. The Sabbath is an institution of Religion,—and if religion be a reality, if it have a spirit as well as a form, it is manifest that the form is the exponent of the Spirit. The form is the medium through which I get at the thing and through which the religion, whatever it be, binds me by its obligations to shew whose I am and whom I ought to serve. Now, viewed in this aspect (and I want you so to view it) is not the incongruity and questionableness of Sabbath day recreations as well as their criminality, at once apparent. Is the Sabbath an institution of religion through which as a creature, rational and responsible, I draw near to God and render to him the homage which is his due? Then unless we confound things that differ and ignore the plainest distinctions, unless we make play worship, and recreation devotion, unless we hold sport is piety and the thousand and one phases of pleasure in all aspects tantamount to the exercises of Godliness it is obvious that the Sabbath is not the season to be so employed however justifiable all this may be in itself. The truth is, and man cannot alter or annul it, the Sabbath is in virtue of its being the Sabbath a grand transmuter, a grand changer of the relative nature of conduct; and just from its very sacredness and the high purposes it is intended to serve of bringing me near to God, and of bringing God near to me, and of binding me as a creature more closely to him. I will add in the midst of this Christian Association, as a sinner saved by grace, it cannot allow of inferior secularities as the mere and specific gratification of our sensuous nature. The compilers of our Catechism were equally at home in the region of natural and revealed Religion and well did they know their mutual bearings. Their moral Philosophy was as sound as their Divinity was orthodox, and they but gave utterance not to the breathings of rigid Calvinism (as some would have it and as many slander it) but to the united voice of Theism in all its forms and in all its obligations when they declare that “the Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending the whole time in

the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up with the works of necessity and mercy."

It may be all very well then to skim your beautiful harbor of a Saturday afternoon, (and I am about to plead with your masters for that promised half-holiday) but the oar must be quiet and the sail remain furled on the holy Sabbath day. It may be all very well to scour the woods and dance if you please on the verdant sward to the melody of your companions, male or female, till the woods ring again; but you must keep your feet from the holy Sabbath of the Lord. It may be all very well to go to the social party and reciprocate as you may all the livelier emotions of your hearts, but you must not seek your own pleasure on God's holy day. It may be all very well that you read the exciting tale, or the seraphic poem, and luxuriate amid the gorgeous creations of the sons of imagination and of song, but the Book of Books, the Holy Bible, the Book of God, that Book which a demented and impotent priesthood have dared to reprobate and curse, and which to destroy, if they could, they would annihilate the arts of printing and writing and thereby too that Book,—is to be your chief companion on the holy Sabbath of the Lord. Yes you may as you are able and as opportunity offers regale yourselves with whatever is beautiful and true and good in the heaven above and in the earth below but on the Sabbath of the Lord, the Lord thereof is to be the chief theme of your thoughts and the chief delight of your heart, His nature, His works, His relations to you, your obligations to him and the mysteries and grace and glory of the plan of Redemption through the obedience unto the death of his own son, these are to command your attention, to feed your devotion to spiritualize your affections and elevate your hopes, and thus the Sabbath will be your renovator, your weekly restorer from toil and labor, your weekly preparer for duty and work, and thus shall you find that this is the rest wherewith God causes the weary to rest.

There are one or two thoughts still of a somewhat important nature as connected with the subject which deserve to be noticed in order to complete the views which have been submitted.

One of the strongest incentives to an undue love of amusement especially to young men in the middle and upper ranks of society lies in example. There is wisdom in the proverb "As the auld cock craws the young one learns." And it is not at all surprising, however to be lamented, that the Ball room and the Theatre and other kindred places should possess so many attractions to their inexperienced and susceptible minds, when they know that their parents in this respect are under the same influences and cherish the same predilections as themselves, and is it reasonable to expect that there will in ordinary cases be wisdom and moderation on the part of the young, when there is folly and extravagance on the part of the old?

Water cannot, according to the laws which govern it, rise above its level, but it descends to a lower plane with a speed according to its momentum, and so when our sons seem to prefer pleasure to wit and amusement to employment and run at the last into every excess without restraint and with perverse rapidity, we may weep, but we need not wonder, for we ourselves supplied the momentum.

Another incentive to an undue love of amusement lies in too long business hours. It is a matter of thankfulness indeed that in this Province the hours of labour are not excessive either in city or in country. At least I believe so except in a very few instances. But the experience of older people should furnish us with a guide as to the regulation of the hours of labour. Society with us is plastic,—we may mould it as we please. Its plasticity moreover has not yet begun to harden. There are no hereditary prejudices as to labour, to uproot, no habits of life hoar with the age of centuries to overcome, no vested rights of feudalism to part with. The employer and the employed stand to each other in fresh and healthful and simple relationship, vastly different indeed from what they were till of late in our Fatherland and in all the older countries, and which down till this very hour present the hugest difficulties to the due regulation of the hours of labour. We know nothing of all this. We ought not and we shall not if we govern ourselves by the teachings of History. Yes, we may yet mould our social state as we please and one of the finest phases into which it can be cast would be short hours of labour for every day, and the half-holiday every Saturday afternoon. I plead for this modification

on the score of profit to the master in the first place, and on the score of health, virtue, religion, happiness to the workman in the second. I cannot wait to prove it, but I am prepared to do so, though it is not in my line, that other things being equal, short hours give more work and better, than long ones. I cannot wait to prove it but I am ready to do so, that short hours are every way favourable to all the higher interests of the working classes, and if I lived in this city I would, minister as I am, throw myself into the short hour movement, and plead for it, and reason for it, so long as there was breath in my body, and fight for it if you will, but only with my own legitimate weapons, though in fighting I should fall.

One other incentive to an undue love of amusement lies in the nature of our police regulations.

Everybody knows that our taverns and rum shops are the scenes of much that is called amusement. Everybody knows that the amusements themselves are not always ended when the tavern is emptied, nay, the tap room is left that the frolickers may have wider scope for their wildness, as they disturb the dull cold ear of night with their Bacchanal revelry. Everybody knows the meaning of the phrase, drunk and disorderly; and when this phrase finds its meaning in the opinion of the Watchman it implies a night's lodging in the Police cell, and a morning's appearance at the Police Bar. But these houses bear the stamp of Police authority, and are licensed to sell the very thing that leads to the Police disturbance and the Police punishment. What incongruity in Legislation! What a libel on the exercise of authority! What a burlesque on punishment! To license to sell and then punish the poor wight who bought! To license to sell and yet lecture the raw, inexperienced, reckless lad, standing with shamed face and dishonoured name in his humiliating plight against ever being found in such a place again, the place which is kept open and sells its drink by his authority and his sanction. Would it not seem that the License is granted to minister to the crime lest the magisterial Bench should want employment?

It has been asserted in the whole previous illustration that amusement is con-natural to the young. To prevent such amusement is as rude as to prevent the lamb from gambolling

on the green grass, or the birds from singing on the lovely tree. What wonder is it that in the one case as well as in the other there should be unsullied purity as there is exuberant joy. Give me well ordered homes where Parental authority is softened by Parental Wisdom and Parental Piety, and in which is heard every day, the melody of joy and health. Give me well conducted schools where the heart as well as the head is taught and where there are learned as they can be learned nowhere else the lessons of regulating the will and the desires to the authority of reason and the Word of God. Give me well governed cities in which there is no public countenance given to vice, in which there are no allowed means and appliances of vicious indulgence, in which the chief business of the Magistrate is to create and foster a taste for the cleanly and the healthy and the true and the beautiful and to provide funds wherewith the inherent sense of the refined and lovely in man may meet him wherever he turns in our parks and rides and parades and commons, and surely this is more agreeable business than the providing of jails for the careless and bridewells for the lazy. Give me these things and there will be comparatively little else to be apprehended from the amusements of youth. But after all my young friends, to be happy you must be satisfied, for yourselves after all you must eat of that continual feast which the life of a good man furnishes. A purified conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ, a holy heart renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, these are the elements, nay the sure essence of bliss. With these in your possession and fairly dealt by, O for you the sun will shine with a purer ray and the winds will blow with a softer breath and the flowers will wear a richer hue, and the glad waters dance with a merrier sound. You will eat your meat with a nicer taste, and drink your drink with a keener zest, and work your work with a lighter hand and a lighter heart. If you smile you will smile more sweetly, if you laugh you will laugh more joyously, and if you weep and young people must weep, young men must weep, yours will be manly tears, not tears of proud defiance nor of dark discontent but of perfect resignation to the will and the way of your Father and your God.

Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasure while we live,

Tis religion can supply
 Solid comfort when we die.
 And after death our joys shall be
 Lasting as eternity.

My hope is, and my labour will be rewarded, if my hope be realized, that the aspirations of the Poet breathed in those lovely lines may express the experience of every young man before me,—

Live while you may, the Epicure will say,
 And seize the pleasures of the fleeting day.
 Live while you may the sacred preacher cries,
 And give to God each moment as it flies!
 Lord, in my view, let both united be,
 I live in pleasure while I live to thee!

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